

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 04652 241203Z

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 04652

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PLAB, UR, BE

SUBJECT: SOVIET STRATEGY VIS-A-VIS LABOR MOVEMENT: PLO
IN THE ILO

1. HOUTHUYS, THE LEADER OF THE LARGEST LABOR UNION IN BELGIUM, SEES SOVIET STRATEGY VIS-A-VIS THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE WEST AS HAVING TWO MAJOR ELEMENTS:

A. THE SOVIETS PORTRAY U.S. LABOR UNIONS AS EXTENSIONS OF CAPITALISM AND, ESPECIALLY, THE U.S.-DOMINATED MULTINATIONAL FIRMS AND, THUS, AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE AMERICAN EFFORT TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION IN EUROPE. HOUTHUYS SAID THAT, UNFORTUNATELY, THE SOVIETS ARE CONDUCTING THIS CAMPAIGN WITH INTELLIGENCE, SUBTILITY, AND DILIGENCE. ALSO, HE SAID, THERE WAS NO ORGANIZED COUNTER-CAMPAIGN; THE FIELD WAS LEFT TO THE SOVIETS.

B. THE SOVIETS GRASP EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO DIVIDE U.S. AND EUROPEAN LABOR MOVEMENTS, HOUTHUYS CONTENTS. A PRIME SOVIET OBJECTIVE IS TO SEPARATE FURTHER THE EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENTS IN THE ILO. TO THIS END, HOUTHUYS EXPECTS THE SOVIETS TO EXPLOIT ISSUES LIKE PLO REPRESENTATION IN THE ILO. NOTHING WOULD PLEASE THE SOVIETS MORE, HOUTHUYS SAID, THAN TO HAVE THE PLO REPRESENTATION ACCEPTED AND, AS A CONSEQUENCE, PROVOKE AFL-CIO WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ILO.

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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 04652 241203Z

2. HOUTHUYS ADVOCATES CLOSE CONCERTATION OF AMERICAN AND

EUROPEAN TACTICS AT THE ILO CONFERENCE IN GENEVA--ESPECIALLY REGARDING CONTENTIOUS ISSUES LIKE PLO REPRESENTATION. HOUTHUYS SEES THE OBJECTIVES OF AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN LABOR AS THE SAME. WHAT IS NEEDED, HE THINKS, IS CLOSER COOPERATION ON TACTICS. HOUTHUYS THINKS THAT THE USSR MIGHT NOT PUSH AS HARD FOR PLO REPRESENTATION IN THE ILO IF THE U.S. AND EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVES LET THE SOVIETS KNOW THAT, IN EXCHANGE FOR LESS PERSISTENCE ON PLO REPRESENTATION, THEY WOULD EASE UP ON EFFORTS TO HIGHLIGHT DEFICIENCIES IN SOVIET LABOR PRACTICES. HOUTHUYS CONSIDERS THAT TACTICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN LABOR CAN BE PRODUCTIVE ONLY IF BOTH SIDES REJECT RIGID PRECONCEPTIONS AND SEARCH TOGETHER FOR PRAGMATIC MEANS TO ATTAIN COMMON OBJECTIVES.FIRESTONE

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